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Making Daily School Attendance a Priority
A Message from the Minister

Students who attend school regularly do better academically, are more likely to stay in school, and are more likely to obtain a high school diploma. Individuals with a high school diploma are also twice as likely to be employed as those without. Because of this direct relationship between school attendance and students' overall success, Manitoba Education is developing initiatives to promote regular school attendance throughout the province.

As a starting point, Manitoba Education engaged Probe Research Inc. to explore issues related to school attendance in Manitoba. This research included interviews with educators, consultations with parents, students, and community members, and findings from a publicly accessible website survey. Probe Research then compiled this information in a report that can be accessed at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/reports/attendance/index.html>.

This report points out that issues related to attendance vary from school to school and are often very complex. Over the past year, Manitoba Education has been working with other government departments to identify ways to support schools and parents. The participating departments developed a framework that identifies specific actions that need to occur, such as information sharing and policy development (see <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/reports/attendance/framework.html>).

As of February 2011, there is a pilot project underway where school divisions across the province are reporting data on monthly school attendance to Manitoba Education. This information will help us work with school divisions to be more responsive to issues involving attendance. In addition, the Department has partnered with the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents in gathering information about practices that increase attendance, student engagement, and graduation rates.

The Department recognizes that for many years schools have been implementing strategies of their own to address local issues of attendance, truancy, and early school leaving. Many schools have also put in place their own initiatives to meet the needs of at-risk learners. These efforts have contributed to the substantial rise in Manitoba's graduation rate from 72.4 percent in 2001 to 82.7 percent in 2010. Manitoba Education has been assisting schools in this area through a number of existing supports, such as the Student Success Initiative, the Aboriginal Academic Achievement Grant, and the Early Literacy Intervention Initiative.

In December 2010, the Manitoba government introduced legislation to help ensure all young people in Manitoba have the opportunity to achieve a good outcome that prepares them for a successful future in the workplace, training, or apprentice programs, or in college or university. *Bill 13—The Preparing Students for Success Act* requires young people to continue pursuing their education until they graduate or turn 18. This will keep students engaged in school and help every student find a path to success.

During the 2011/2012 Funding of Schools Program announcement in January, information was shared about some exciting new supports that will be put in place. A $200,000 grant will be used to develop strategies to address school attendance issues, and a $300,000 grant will be used to develop and identify programs and initiatives to support students and encourage them to stay in school.

By making daily school attendance a priority, Manitoba Education, in collaboration with schools, families, and communities, is providing a framework for action that is multi-faceted and designed to meet the needs of diverse communities.

Nancy Allan
Minister of Education

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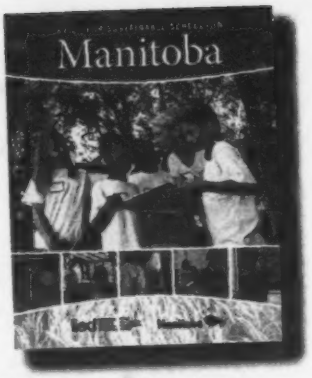
Guide for Sustainable Schools in Manitoba

By Carolee Buckler and Anne MacDiarmid

Manitoba Education has partnered with school divisions throughout the province to produce the *Guide for Sustainable Schools in Manitoba*, a resource to support Manitoba schools and their communities in their goal to become sustainable.



This guide invites schools to take a whole-school approach by exploring sustainability through curriculum, as well as through real-life learning experiences, improvements in school management of resources and facilities (e.g., energy, waste, water, biodiversity, schoolyard design, and purchasing products and materials), and associated social and financial issues.

The *Guide for Sustainable Schools in Manitoba* reflects the important role our schools play in reflecting values that support the sustainability of our planet. It seeks to assist Manitoba schools in

- moving beyond raising sustainability awareness by undertaking concrete, action-oriented learning activities that are integrated with school curricula, leading to teaching for sustainability as an integral component of school planning
- actively engaging in a continuous cycle of planning, implementing, and reviewing approaches to sustainability as part of everyday school operations
- using natural resources in more sustainable ways, thereby achieving measurable social, ecological, educational, and financial outcomes
- monitoring and reporting on progress toward becoming sustainable
- developing values that support a sustainability ethos, working toward sustainability in partnership with local communities and school authorities, and ensuring that students share ownership of sustainability initiatives and decision making

The guide was created with the assistance of a committee made up of representatives from various schools divisions, and was facilitated by the International Institute for Sustainable Development in partnership with Manitoba Education.

To view the *Guide for Sustainable Schools in Manitoba*, visit <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/esd/resources.html>.

For more information on ESD initiatives in Manitoba, contact

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ESD Update

By Carolee Buckler and Anne MacDiarmid

Curriculum

Manitoba Education has recently published *Lake Winnipeg Water Stewardship: A Resource for Grade 8 Science*, which gives a Lake Winnipeg focus to the Grade 8 Science water systems cluster. It provides a context that allows students to deepen their understandings about water systems and concepts related to sustainable development through a focused inquiry into Lake Winnipeg. It can be found on the ESD website at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/esd/index.html>.

Research

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), in partnership with Manitoba Education, has released the report *Measuring Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviours towards Sustainable Development in Grade 10 Students in Manitoba*. This is the second stage of research conducted in Manitoba to develop and deploy standardized measures for assessing changes that might be correlated to investments in ESD. With permission and support from several school divisions, just over 1500 students responded to the online survey. Grade 10 students in Manitoba in 2010 achieved the following rating on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the highest:

- On knowledge of central sustainable development themes and concepts: 2.12
- On attitudes favourable to sustainable development: 2.14
- On behaviours supportive of sustainable development: 2.83

IISD will be conducting a follow-up study in 2013 to measure whether there have been any changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour in Grade 10 students in Manitoba.

UNESCO has also recently released a landmark publication called *Tomorrow Today*, which discusses the increasing significance of sustainable human development, and the importance of education in achieving sustainable development throughout the world. To view the publication, visit <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001898/189880e.pdf>.

ESD Newsletter

The latest *ESD Newsletter* focuses on the issue of celebrating sustainable schools, and highlights some schools in Manitoba that have embraced sustainability. It is available at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/esd/newsletters.html>.

Planning for Distance Learning

By Susan Lee

Distance learning is a means of accessing courses of study even though learners and their teachers, instructors, or tutor/markers may be in different geographic locations.

Schools and learners in some Manitoba communities, particularly those located in rural and northern areas, face a number of challenges such as low student enrolment and shortages of teachers with specific subject expertise. Despite these challenges, schools endeavour to provide learners with a range of course offerings that enable them to meet graduation requirements, explore areas of interest, and meet specific needs.

Distance learning provides flexibility and equitable access to diverse learning opportunities, while at the same time respecting local community decisions regarding educational programming.

If you would like more information about distance learning options available to your students, school, and school division, please visit Manitoba Education's Distance Learning website at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/dl/index.html>.

For more information about distance learning in Manitoba, please contact

Distance Learning Unit
Telephone: 204-325-1700
Toll-free: 1-800-465-9915
Email: distance.learning@gov.mb.ca

Questions to Consider in Planning for Distance Learning

Independent Study Option (ISO)	Teacher Mediated Option (TMO)	Web-Based Course (WBC) Option
▸Have you viewed the list of more than 90 compulsory and elective course offerings available from the Distance Learning Unit? ▸Has your school identified an ISO School Facilitator who provides support to students enrolled in ISO courses and who receives newsletters and updates from the Distance Learning Unit? ▸Do you have students who could benefit from completing courses independently and at their own pace while having some access to a tutor/marker via email or phone? ▸Do you have students who want to access a compulsory or an elective course not offered at your school, or who need a course not currently available at your school, in order to graduate or advance to the next grade?	▸Have you viewed the list of more than 40 compulsory and elective course offerings available from the Distance Learning Unit? ▸Have you taken the opportunity to provide input into the offerings for the upcoming year by completing the needs assessment initiated by the Distance Learning Unit? ▸Has your school identified a TMO Proctor who provides support to students enrolled in TMO courses and who receives newsletters and updates from the Distance Learning Unit? ▸Do you have students who could benefit from completing courses at a distance via teleconference, in a paced environment facilitated by an instructor? ▸Do you have students who want to access a compulsory or an elective course not offered at your school, or who need a course not currently available at your school, in order to graduate or advance to the next grade?	▸Do you have a school division plan or policy regarding local implementation of WBCs? ▸Do you know whether teachers are using WBCs in their classrooms (e.g., as professional learning resources to supplement classroom instruction)? ▸Are your teachers aware of which WBCs are available, and do they know how they can get free access to them? ▸Are your school counsellors aware of how WBCs can be shared across Manitoba? ▸Can your teachers find the list of upcoming training sessions/workshops, and do they know how to register for them? ▸Does your support system include computer/network technicians who are aware of the browser requirements to ensure Blackboard/WebCT is functional?

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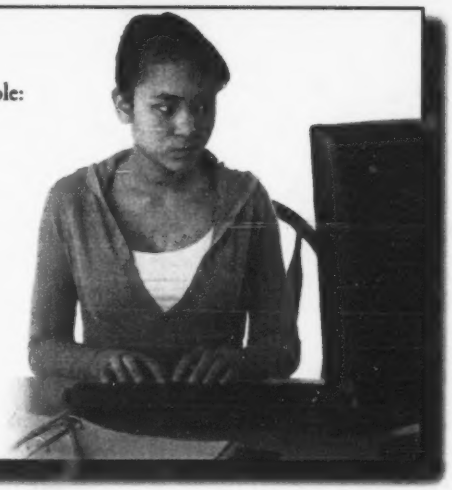

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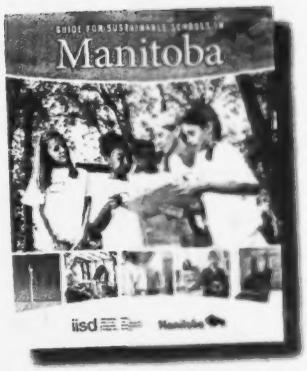

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- Grade 12 Active Healthy Lifestyles

What's New for Web-Based Courses in Manitoba

By Donald Girouard and Howard Griffith

New LMS

Since 2001, Manitoba Education has hosted and provided curriculum-congruent web-based courses (WBCs) for any school division or adult learning centre wishing to use the Internet to implement Senior Years courses. The first courses were developed under a Learning Management System (LMS) called *WebCT 4*, which has since been upgraded to the current version 6.2. Now Manitoba Education is planning on implementing a new LMS called *Blackboard Learn 9.1*.

During this transition, teachers will continue to have access to the current system during the 2011/2012 school year, as both servers will be running at the same time.

The new Blackboard LMS looks and feels like Web 2.0, but there is an added focus on active and collaborative learning for students. It includes a drag-and-drop interface, contextual drop-down menus, improved accessibility, and extra tools such as wikispaces and mash-ups. The new interface is designed to foster student engagement while improving the teaching experience. There is an option for customizable integration with tools that allow synchronous communication between teacher and students. For more information, visit <www.blackboard.com/Teaching-Learning/Learn-Platform.aspx>.

With help from MERLIN, Manitoba Education has set up a new server and has been migrating and testing courses in the new Blackboard environment since the summer of 2010 in anticipation of the release of the new system during the 2011/2012 school year.

Demonstration and training sessions for teachers wanting to use the new system will be announced soon. Many of these sessions will be delivered using web-conferencing tools. Teachers can register for these sessions by using the Workshop Registration System at <https://www4.edu.gov.mb.ca/workshops>.

Course Development

A list of available web-based courses can be found at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/dl/wbc/developedcourses.html>.

Manitoba Education is revising existing web-based courses and developing new ones on an ongoing basis. A list of courses currently being developed can be found at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/tech/wbc/wbcdevsched.html>.

Teachers and school division administrators who would like to add their names to our email announcements list can contact

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Howard Griffith
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E-learning Glossary

Are you confused by the terminology used in web-based courses and related technologies? For example, do you know the difference between the terms *synchronous* and *asynchronous*?

Asynchronous—This is a mode of online delivery where participants are not together at the same time, so they access course materials on their own schedule (for example, a student might submit an assignment at 8 o'clock in the evening, but the teacher may mark the assignment at 10 o'clock the following morning). Sending and receiving emails is another example of asynchronous delivery.

Synchronous—This is a mode of WBC delivery where all participants are present at the same time (for example, when the teacher and student participate in an online chat regarding an assignment). This requires scheduling.

To read more about the terminology used in online learning and to view a list of common acronyms, visit <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/dl/wbc/wbcgloss.html>.

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www.mtbb.mb.ca

Media Literacy Week—Blurred Images

By Cheryl Prokopanko

The message behind the Blurred Images Challenge, this year's Media Literacy Week celebration, is trusting your own feelings about what is real, and thinking critically about what you hear and see in the media.

The Blurred Images Challenge was born from the collaborative efforts of Manitoba Education, Manitoba Teachers' Society, Manitoba Association of Computing Educators (ManACE), and staff and students from St. James-Assiniboia School Division. It is meant to engage K–12 students in learning about the effect of media on gender issues and to encourage them to become involved in taking positive actions for change.

The challenge to teachers is to get students involved and to support them in learning to think critically about the messages they receive through the media about "gender roles," and about how those messages affect them personally. The challenge to students is to think about ways to make a difference by

- spending a little time learning about media literacy
- thinking critically about the portrayal of gender in the media
- speaking out and describing how the portrayal of gender in the media affects them
- identifying what changes they would like to see
- discussing how they can educate other students about the issue
- thinking how they can protect themselves from being manipulated by what they experience in the media
- sharing their learning online at the Blurred Images Challenge

The Blurred Images website contains Manitoba curriculum-congruent sample learning experiences and K–12 resources to support teachers and students in their learning about media and gender issues. Students and teachers are invited to visit the Blurred Images website and share examples of how they have taken action to meet this challenge with other students and educators across Manitoba and around the world.

Collaborating with the Media Awareness Network during Media Literacy Week is a natural fit for Manitoba Education because media literacy is part of the Developmental Continuum for Literacy with ICT Across the Curriculum (LwICT). LwICT describes the development of critical and creative thinking and the ethical and responsible use of information and communication technology. To learn more about Manitoba Education's Literacy with ICT initiative, visit <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/tech/lict/index.html>.

By participating in the Blurred Images Challenge, students will develop

- awareness that the media plays a role in how they think about themselves and how they view the world
- understanding that media messages are not necessarily accurate and that the media has its own agenda
- recognition that they can decide for themselves what they think is cool, popular, and real, and that they need not believe whatever the media tells them
- mindfulness of how media affects their thoughts about themselves as they are bombarded daily by media messages, and how they can protect and empower themselves
- the ability to take positive actions to expose inaccuracies and stereotypes in the current media messages to youth
- leadership by teaching others about media literacy

To take the Blurred Images Challenge, visit <http://blurredimages.wikispaces.com>. While there, check out the *Learn* page to find sample learning experiences and resources. You can also listen to the Blurred Images theme song, which was created and recorded by Grades 4 and 5 students from Brooklands School and their teacher, Ryan Miller. Students can also share their learning and discuss the actions they have taken in the online gallery.

The Blurred Images Challenge is a wonderful opportunity to get your students thinking critically about their own thoughts and feelings regarding their self-esteem and self-assurance, and about how the media influences their perception of themselves. Are they listening to what they are being told by the media or are they "trusting within themselves?"

For further information, contact

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Email: cheryl.prokopanko@gov.mb.ca

Black History Bibliography

By Elizabeth Buckland

Manitoba Education has compiled a new bibliography of Kindergarten to Grade 12 resources that support teachers and students in their study of Black history. All resources are available from the Department library.

The bibliography is divided into the following sections: Ancient Africa, A Global History of Slavery, Slavery and Abolition in the Americas, Colonial Rule in Africa, the Underground Railroad, Canadian Black History, Civil Rights for Black Americans, Apartheid in Africa, Africa Today, African-Americans Today, and Black Canadians Today. Sections are further divided into the categories of fiction, non-fiction, and media. There are also sections dedicated to alternate formats and Black history websites.

The Black History Bibliography can be accessed at <www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/iru/library_publications/bibliographies/index.html>.

Infusing LwICT across the Curriculum

By Michelle Larose-Kuzenko

Literacy with information and communication technology (LwICT) is about students and teachers thinking critically and creatively about information and communication. It also means using ICT responsibly and ethically as citizens of the global community.

The LwICT initiative began in 2004. It has been in full implementation across the province in K–8 classrooms over the last two years, and most divisions are now considering implementing LwICT in the Senior Years as well.

Literacy with ICT is not so much about technology as it is about good teaching and assessment practices. As ICT has become infused into the curriculum through inquiry, it has changed the face of the traditional classroom. Teachers now assess students' literacy with ICT at each stage of their development using the LwICT Developmental Continuum.

LwICT is an integral component of 21st century learning and, with its focus on inquiry and digital citizenship, a foundation of essential learning. The LwICT model underpins all other Manitoba Education projects that infuse ICT across the curriculum, such as Interdisciplinary Middle Years Multimedia (IMYM) and events such as the annual BYTE Conference and Media Literacy Week.

LwICT Action Plan

Manitoba Education and the LwICT Advisory Committee, which represents key educational stakeholders, have collaborated on the development and implementation of an Action Plan to support the LwICT model. This Action Plan outlines the following actions:

- outreach to pre-service teachers, external stakeholders, divisional curriculum consultants, and school leaders
- research and development of resources to support K–12 teachers
- response to requests from the field for professional learning

LwICT in the Senior Years

Many school divisions are extending LwICT from K–8 into the Senior Years, and 2010/2011 has been a transitional and exploratory year as some divisions are experimenting with how to go about supporting its implementation and deciding what that will look like. In many divisions, the first step involves a focus on the Affective Domain of the LwICT Developmental Continuum, which includes ethics and responsibility, social implications, and collaboration.

Online Resources

Manitoba Education continues to support the work of divisional LwICT implementation teams with new resources for mentors/facilitators and school leaders, online learning communities, professional learning, onsite consultation meetings, and resources such as curriculum-based learning experiences, professional learning experiences for teachers, and interdisciplinary units for the Early and Middle Years.

Manitoba Education creates and updates resources to support teachers as they infuse LwICT into their teaching and their students' learning.

For more information on infusing LwICT into the classroom, contact

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Rosalind Robb
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Web Resources

The Manitoba Education website provides an overview of the LwICT Developmental Continuum, snapshots, and learning experiences.
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/tech/liet/index.html

The LwICT wiki site is an entry point to a series of wikis on areas of special interest, such as digital citizenship, supporting principles, assessment, and copyright.
https://lwict.wikispaces.com/

The Bookmarks site highlights articles and research on topics related to LwICT, such as 21st century learning, digital literacy, inquiry learning, and critical thinking.
www.delicious.com/lwict

Linking Communities through Internet Technologies

By Dr. Rodelyn Stoeber

New Internet technologies are available that can provide teachers—especially those in isolated rural areas—with support in dealing with the many challenges they face in the classroom.

My research seeks to understand how the use of Internet technologies in a virtual community affects, positively or negatively, the teaching of science in a potentially high-risk environment—in this case, the minority language setting.

There is often considerable distance between schools within a school division, and it can be very difficult and expensive getting all the teachers together in one place for professional development sessions or other projects. To investigate whether recent innovations in Internet technologies could alleviate these challenges, Project CRÉAS (*Centre de recherche sur l'enseignement et l'apprentissage des sciences*) was initiated. This project is meant to support teachers in their instructional role, not to replace them through the implementation of distance education courses.

Project CRÉAS is a collaborative effort among the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM), the Bureau de l'éducation française (BEF) of Manitoba Education, science and science education professors of the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface (CUSB), as well as francophone Grade 9 Science teachers. Dr. Léonard Rivard has been instrumental in the implementation of the research and has provided guidance for the direction of this work. With Dr. Brian Lewthwaite from the University of Manitoba, we have developed and validated an instrument to assess the effectiveness of the professional development provided to teachers.

An offshoot of Project CRÉAS is Project PEER (*Petites écoles en réseau* or the Creation of a Small School Network). In this project, small francophone rural schools were linked together by Internet technologies to explore scientific principles and concepts within a social constructivist framework. This project's model could be applied not only to those teaching in a minority language context, but also to those teaching in isolated rural areas, whatever the language of instruction. Within the framework of Project PEER, information and communication technologies were developed and used to reduce teachers' isolation, to provide them with additional support, and to promote the study of science among francophone students.

In another research project, a microcomposter was used to study the dynamics of a "mini-ecosystem." Internet technologies were used to support student understanding of the importance of composting and the science associated with this activity. Using a prototype microcomposter developed by Fernand Saurette, a scientist from CUSB, students observed and tested the factors impinging on the decomposition of organic matter and the recycling of these elements into the ecosystem. They also studied the biodiversity within this mini-ecosystem. The microcomposter was used as a tool for teaching the scientific principles involved and for emphasizing the importance of sustainable development and the protection of the environment. Technological tools were used to facilitate and motivate students in a collaborative learning environment. These included Moodle, which is an interactive website, Elluminate, which is synchronous webcasting software, and the electronic portfolio ePEARL.

The final research project was "Developing scientific literacy through Education for Sustainable Development in a small school network." It provided professional development and resources for teachers in order to explore how scientific literacy can be developed through the creation of problem-based scenarios and practical experiments dealing with sustainable development issues. Problem-based scenarios suitable to the blended learning environment (synchronous and asynchronous instruction) were created in collaboration with teachers, scientists from CUSB, and the science and sustainable development consultant from BEF. These were accessed by teachers through a wiki, and participants used Elluminate to meet and communicate virtually.

The scenarios, which involved the study of values, issues, and action plans, were directly linked to Manitoba curricula. Teachers involved in the pilot project received professional development with regards to the concepts of sustainable development, the issues, the use of scenarios to enhance student involvement and motivation, and the use of Internet technologies to foster meaningful conversations centred on the learning contexts. Two learning contexts were created—one involving the study of community bodies of water, and the other involving the study of biodiversity using a microcomposter. While the pilot project has been completed, more resources for this project are being developed based on results from the study.

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Profile

Dr. Rodelyn Padua Stoeber is an Assistant Professor at the Faculté d'éducation et études professionnelles at College universitaire de Saint-Boniface. Prior to coming to CUSB, she was a high school mathematics and science teacher at Vincent Massey Collegiate in Winnipeg. Besides being involved in collaborative projects with the Bureau de l'éducation française and the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, she also teaches courses in curriculum and instruction in secondary and elementary science, evaluation, and is an instructor in the program Formation en milieu scolaire (FEMS) for pre-service teachers.

Promoting Student Attendance at MFEC

By Brent Bedford
Administrator of Many Faces Education Centre, Flin Flon School Division

Many Faces Education Centre (MFEC) is an alternative school that was established in 1994. Like most schools, student attendance at MFEC is often an issue. As educators, we all know that we can make a difference in students' lives—but only if we get them into our classrooms.

For the past three years, I have had the privilege of being the administrator at MFEC. One of the advantages of alternative schools is they are able to have smaller class sizes, which helps teachers build relationships and really get to know the people in their classrooms. When students miss a class, they know that an effort will be made to contact them, their parents, or even their friends to let them know we missed them and we want them in the building. When they return, they are welcomed back. Again, with small numbers of students, this can be done every day.

In our efforts to make attending school more attractive, we have developed "MF Bucks" as an extrinsic motivation for students. We take attendance three times each half day—at the start of class, right after break, and at the end of the half day. By attending class, students earn MF Bucks that they can use in our cafeteria. You would think that a small incentive wouldn't do much, but we are always surprised by how excited older high school kids get about a little free food. Along these lines, we have used incentives like an afternoon at the ski lodge, a trip to a ski hill, and outdoor canoe trips to encourage students to meet deadlines when completing their work.

We have also struggled with getting parents into the building to participate in their children's education. Several times throughout the year, we put on "feasts" to encourage families to visit our facility. We try very hard to let the parents know that the school does not have to be a place where the discussions are negative. We want them to see that our school is a welcoming place and we all share the same goal: success for their child.

Many students who choose an alternative program have not had rewarding school experiences. To remedy this, we instituted further incentives for attendance and performance, such as posting on the walls in the student/staff lounge each credit that each student earns. Students search for their posting after they acquire a credit and even want to provide their input on what the little laminated posting should look like. We also celebrate all of their birthdays with a birthday party and cake each month. You might think this to be too juvenile, but they love it and look forward to it.

Sometimes it's those little extras that make a huge difference. Young mothers who attend our facility are able to bring their kids in on those days when the babysitter doesn't work out. We also like to fit in small acts of appreciation whenever we can, just to show that we are glad they attended that day. This could be in the form of some pizza for afternoon break or breakfast sandwiches in the morning. At our weekly assemblies, we focus on a virtue, and teachers share an anecdote and present a voucher to a deserving student from their class who demonstrated that virtue.

As in many schools, one cannot say enough about the staff. It takes special people to work in an alternative setting where a lot of the students have not experienced much academic success and often don't buy into the whole education concept. Our staff members realize that students must want to be there before any curriculum can be covered. The relationships that these teachers build with the students are critical to each student's success.

At MFEC, we strive to create a welcoming and safe environment where individuals can overcome obstacles and find success.

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